

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

Prepared by: Legal Services Unit

Date: 14 October 2011

Name of Witness: Ronald Charles Twomey

Address of Witness: Level 1, 101 Sturt Street, Townsville 4810

Occupation: Assistant Commissioner, Northern Region
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

Division: Queensland Fire and Rescue Service
Department of Community Safety

Telephone: (Work) [REDACTED]

(Mobile) [REDACTED]

I, Ronald Charles Twomey, Assistant Commissioner, Northern Region, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS), Department of Community Safety (DCS) in the State of Queensland declare:

Background

My Experience

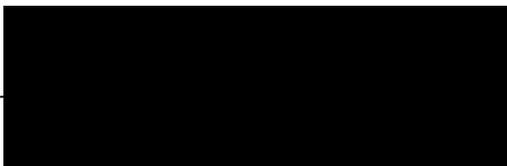
1. I have been employed by the QFRS for 21½ years since April 1990.
2. I carry out my role as Assistant Commissioner, Northern Region from the DCS regional office located on Level 1, 101 Sturt Street, Townsville.
3. I report to the QFRS Commissioner for financial and performance management issues. For operational matters, including staffing, service delivery planning, capital, technical services and operational policy issues, I report to Iain MacKenzie, the Deputy Commissioner.

I now attach a copy of the Role Description for my position marked "RCT-1".

4. My work background and relevant experience in emergency management includes completion of an Electrical Mechanic apprenticeship, prior to serving as firefighter and Station Officer with the Melbourne Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) from 1974 to 1990.

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5. I commenced service with QFRS as a Station Officer with the Townsville Fire Brigade in 1990 and progressed to Manager, Regional Training 1991/94 and Regional Services Coordinator 1994/97. My current role as Assistant Commissioner Northern Region since 5th August 1997.
6. I have been awarded trade qualifications, and Diplomas of Business Management and Front Line Management. I have completed a Public Sector Management Course (PSMC), and I am a past member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Institute of Public Administration Australia.
7. My emergency management practical and leadership experience over 37 years is broad ranging and includes: front line service delivery across all hazards; staff development; business development; and strategic leadership of regional operations.

Regional Profile

8. Northern Region has a population of 233,000 people occupying 550,000km². It is, geographically, the largest QFRS region; and includes coastal and outback environments in the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Hinchinbrook, Townsville, Burdekin, most of Whitsunday, Charters Towers, Flinders, Richmond, McKinlay, Cloncurry, most of Carpentaria, Doomadgee, Burke, Mount Isa, Boulia and Diamantina.
9. QFRS services are delivered (in accordance with the QFRS Divisional Plan) by Urban and Rural Operational staff, working collaboratively with these communities and other State Government Agencies, to deliver a range of frontline operational services along with advisory and consultative services to support community safety outcomes across all hazards.
10. The regional boundary extends south along the coast from the top of the Cardwell Range to Bowen, then west following the Central Region boundary to Poeppel Corner in the Channel Country, then follows the Queensland / South Australian border and the entire Queensland / Northern Territory border to the Gulf of Carpentaria coast, then follows the Gulf Coast to the north of Karumba, then follows Far Northern Region boundary to the top of the Cardwell Range.

I now attach a copy of a map showing the Northern Region marked "RCT-2".

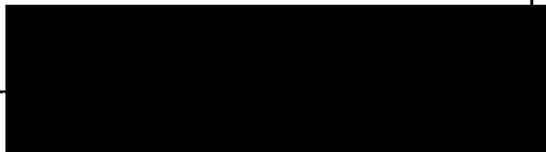
Northern Region Urban Operations and Rural Operations Resources

11. Regional Urban Operations staffing is led by me as Assistant Commissioner, and includes: 159 permanent Fire Officers; 215 Auxiliary Fire Officers; 1 Communications Centre Manager; 8 full-time Communications Officers; 3 casual Communications Officers; and 17 administration and support officers. We operate from 20 Urban Fire

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Stations spread across 4 Urban Operations Command Areas, Firecom Northern and regional functional support commands.

I now attach the Regional Staff Model marked "RCT-3".

12. Regional Urban Operations Branch is structured in five (5) sections as follows:

- Northern Command
 - 2 x Permanent Stations in Townsville
 - 2 x Composite Stations in Ingham, Charters Towers
 - 3 x Auxiliary Stations in Halifax, Forrest Beach, Magnetic Island
- Southern Command
 - 2 x Permanent Stations in Townsville
 - 2 x Composite Stations in Ayr, Bowen
 - 3 x Auxiliary Stations in Giru, Home Hill, Collinsville
- Western Command
 - 1 x Composite Station in Mount Isa
 - 5 x Auxiliary Stations in Boulia, Cloncurry, Julia Creek, Richmond, Hughenden.
- Operations Support Command
 - Includes management, coordination and support of all rescue disciplines including swift water rescue, safety equipment, breathing apparatus, hazmat, scientific support and major events planning.
- Firecom Northern
 - This Communications Centre supports all QFRS Regional Operations.

13. The Urban Regional Development Branch also provides operational response and support, and includes the Community Safety Command, Professional Development Command, Mechanical Workshops and Business Support.

14. Regional Rural Operations staffing is led by a Regional Manager Rural Operations (RMRO), and includes 9 permanent fire officers and approximately 3000 volunteer firefighters in 190 rural brigades spread across 2 Rural Operations Areas located in Townsville and Charters Towers. The RMRO reports to an Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations (ACRO) based in QFRS State headquarters at Kedron in Brisbane.

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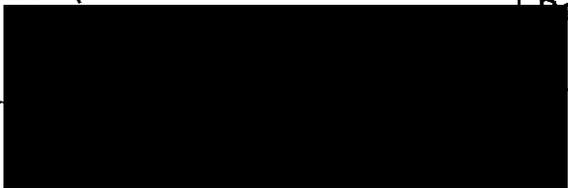
Seasonal Conditions and Recent Experience

15. Northern Region generally enjoys a dry tropical climate consisting of wet and dry seasons — and an annual rainfall between 1000mm and 1500mm varying across its coastal, outback and gulf environments. We also experience severe threats in the wildfire season (usually July to November) and the wet season (between December and March). In 2009, an above average wildfire season extended from May to December. The 2010 / 2011 wet season, as predicted, brought an above average wet season — producing tropical storms and tropical cyclones, with TC Tasha, TC Anthony and TC Yasi reaching landfall.
16. The region has a well practiced disaster management system involving two District Disaster Management Groups (DDMGs) in the Mt Isa and Townsville Police Districts, and Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMG) in all LGAs. These communities have been generally well educated and prepared by their Local Authority and Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) over recent years, due to the frequency of summer storm and wet season events affecting Northern Region (including TC Larry in 2006 and flooding in 2009 / 2010).
17. Severe weather events, combined with the topography of the Queensland coastal strip, impact on the Bruce Highway north of Gympie to Cairns. As usual for Northern Region, 2010 / 2011 storms and flooding cut access at various locations between Bowen and Ingham. Ingham and Halifax urban communities are commonly affected by flooding, as is the Ingham Fire Station, which floods periodically in the wet season and relies on business continuity plans to continue operations.
18. QFRS Northern Region monitors long range and daily Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) weather information, to maintain situational awareness. In accordance with our State Rescue Plan, Regional Risk Matrix, current information and past experience, we respond by situating the required resources in the urban areas of greatest risk. We have station to State operational coordination via the State Operations Centre (SOC), NR Regional Operations Centre (ROCI) and Incident Management Teams (IMTS). We can, and do, access additional resources and specialist staff (including Swift Water Rescue ["SWR"] staff and equipment) to meet our planned needs.
19. During the 2010 / 2011 storm and wet season, at the request of the SOC, Northern Region deployed 60 personnel to support operations in Central Region, North Coast Region, South West Region, Brisbane Region and South East Region. Similarly, between Christmas Eve to the closing recovery stages of TC Yasi, we (ROCI) requested support from SOC and received 81 QFRS staff from other regions to support our response to the severe weather and TC events.

Refer to Attachment marked "RCT-4" – Northern Region 2010/11 Incidents by type and station

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Commission Requirement

20. The remainder of this statement responds to matters raised by the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry, namely correspondence dated 13 September 2011 (Requirement No. 1718231) requesting that I provide a statement to the Commission.
1. **The preparations undertaken by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (Northern Region) in advance of the 2010-2011 summer storm and wet season**
21. The seasonal outlooks issued by BOM indicated a strong El Nifia influence, and predictions and statements regarding the probability of above normal Tropical Cyclonic activity on the north east coast in the 2010 / 2011 summer storm and wet season. As set out below, QFRS Northern Region responded accordingly by preparing ourselves for the expected severe storm and wet season.
22. The Regional Management team met during the wildfire season on Friday 10 September 2010, to commence planning and preparation for the upcoming wet and cyclone season. The planning process considered the regional rescue matrix 2007/08, and reviewed the region's identified high risk urban communities based on our previous experience and exposures – particularly in respect to SWR needs. The planning process confirmed a pre-planned benchmark of 16 to 22 additional SWR personnel would be requested from SOC for deployment into Northern Region known urban risk areas. The planning process also led to the development of the Northern Region Plan for Extraordinary Events 2010/2011, to guide the pre-deployment of the 16 – 22 stand alone Swift Water Rescue technicians with pre determined equipment to required locations, based on BOM forecast weather and flooding assessments.
23. The planning included their deployment to pre-deployment staging areas with vehicle and hand held communications capability, suitable operational procedures including command and control arrangements, and the availability of ongoing support regarding logistical or other requirements. Further, local action plans were developed following the most recent deployments.
24. Each assigned QFRS Commander engaged with, and participated in LDMG and DDMG meetings that involved disaster preparation and planning. The LDMG and DDMG meetings occurred every three weeks until late November, then fortnightly throughout December, and continuously as required thereafter.
- Refer to Attachment "RCT-5" – Northern Region DM Group Representation
25. Our Northern Region Operations Support Command reviewed operational SWR response plans and Fire Communication Centre Directives (FCCDs); together with unpacking, testing and replenishing the Northern Region Urban Search And Rescue ("USAR") Cache.

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26. All station crews were refreshed in wet season response activities and SWR support activities, through the Coastal and Western Command weekly information bulletin (WIB). Throughout December 2010, Area Commanders provided all coastal high risk stations with an overview of the new disaster management framework and arrangements, and discussed wet and cyclone season preparedness at station level including station business continuity plans (BCPs). The Hinchinbrook Flood Warden network met and tested, and practiced, its communications and procedures at Ingham Fire Station in November 2010.

27. Our designated Incident Control Centres (ICCs) were assessed, and works undertaken to rectify identified issues. All ICCs were tested and functioned appropriately. The ICC at Ingham Fire Station is regularly unusable during water inundation during floods; however, the BCP for Ingham Fire Station has a predetermined re-location to the Ingham QAS Station.

28. Meetings were conducted with Air Operations Call When Needed (CWN) aircraft operators to confirm availability and test air / ground communications, and identified key personnel were refreshed in the establishment of the Regional Operations Coordination Centre.

29. While operating under the QFRS networked approach of station to state command and control – Northern Region also relies on the broad based local knowledge of its firefighters, and applies the experience of our staff in past campaigns when planning and preparing for seasonal activities. We also plan in accordance with the QFRS Divisional Plan, QFRS State Rescue Policy, and our Northern Region Plan for Extraordinary Events 2010/2011 to plan, resource and implement our operational arrangements.

Refer to Attachment marked "RCT-6" – Divisional Plan

Refer to Attachment marked "RCT-7" – State Rescue Policy

Refer to Attachment marked "RCT-8" – Northern Region Risk Matrix

Refer to Attachment marked "RCT-9" – Northern Region Plan for Extraordinary Events 2010/2011).

30. In terms of Swift Water Rescue, it should be noted that in the current State Rescue Policy, QFRS is responsible for full rescue capability in urban areas serviced by full-time stations (page 12, State Rescue Policy, being Attachment "RCT-9").

31. The process of planning, review and networking continued from September 2010 into March 2011 when the risk to the community had reduced, and recovery and review

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operations became the priority. During that period, Northern Region was impacted by TC Tasha, TC Anthony, TC Yasi and many low pressure systems producing flooding rains.

Refer to Attachment marked "RCT-10" - Summary of preparations for 2010/2011 summer storm and wet season

2. The preparations being undertaken by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (Northern Region) in advance of the 2011-2012 summer storm and wet season

32. Northern Region has continued to review and develop our systems and plans in the post TC Yasi period. We are participating in the overall QFRS review program, including the implementation of all the recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry.
33. We, along with all QFRS regions, are developing a specific and comprehensive Northern Region Swift Water Rescue Operational Plan, to address matters of deployment and command and control and support of SWR operations.
34. We are also adopting a similar process of planning and review to that undertaken last wet season and will, of course, align our preparations to the forecasted weather conditions.
35. Some particular aspects of the Commission of Inquiry recommendations being implemented include delivery of SWR Awareness to all Auxiliary Firefighters, and the delivery of Level 1 SWR training to Auxiliary firefighters commencing with high risk locations. Ingham has been identified as likely to require a permanent SWR capability, and we have programmed 4 of the permanent firefighters' positions there for SWR Level 2 single discipline training.
36. We have provided advice to the QFRS review team of my intention to increase the number of Level 2 SWR firefighters in Townsville from 16 to 24, and to include in that number 6 Level 2 SWR single discipline positions.
37. With respect to additional suitable vehicles to improve our operational deployment capability of SWR rescue assets, we have provided feedback to the QFRS review committee requesting the retrofitting of Echo and Yankee vehicles to carry SWR equipment (including work platforms), and requested three additional Yankee type vehicles to increase our capability to four.
38. To ensure the broadest base of Level 2 SWR officers, we have adopted a new initiative of requiring all new Level 2 technical rescue aspirants to be SWR capable. We will also continue our three monthly swim competence tests for Level 2 SWR officers.
39. We will continue to deploy Level 2 SWR officers in sufficient numbers to ensure operational safety and effectiveness. Also all Commanders are aware all Northern Region

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Technical Rescue equipment is presently located in the operations Support Command in Townsville and the Rescue Station in Mount Isa. The process of increasing the number of personal floatation devices (PFDs) on appliances is underway via a QFRS State allocation.

40. We have developed and implemented a program of training for Northern Region SWR Level 2 technicians in basic helicopter procedures, including how to use winches and how to manoeuvre in and out of aircraft. We now have eight Level 2 staff trained and will continue to increase numbers. Northern Region's trainer is being seconded to deliver this training for other regions. In addition, Northern Region Level 2 officers have delivered Level 1 training to the majority of EMQ Air Wing Staff (and some Air Wing Staff are trained to Level 2) and these EMQ staff are part of our current annual skills maintenance program. Northern Region has also developed three deployment kits available to support deployment throughout the region.
41. With respect to waterproof communications, we were trialing waterproof radios in 2010 / 2011, but ceased the trial as South East Region was doing a similar trial. We are awaiting the results of that trial, and advice on the direction QFRS is to follow. We do, however, have communication deployment kits available in waterproof bags.
42. Northern Region has also commenced a project to upgrade our Fire Communications Centre facility and technology, including: increasing the number of operator consoles; and improving connectivity with Firecom Far Northern and Firecom Central to enable them to pick up the workload should conditions require the evacuation or closure of Firecom Northern.
43. The Northern Region Operational Support Command is currently reviewing our regional technical rescue risk profile to identify emerging regional needs, and thereby inform and influence our 2011 / 2012 planning process and outcomes, including the type and nature of emergency response for remote communities. In this regard, we will work with the QFRS state review team and collaborate with other agencies and QPS.

Refer to Attachment marked "RCT-11" - Summary of preparations for 2011 / 2012 summer storm and wet season

3. The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service's Swift Water Rescue capability within the Northern Region, including in relation to the communities of the Gulf of Carpentaria

44. In accordance with the State Rescue Policy, all Northern Region full-time urban fire station staff are trained in Level 1 Technical Rescue disciplines, including SWR.
45. In addition, during the 2010 / 2011 storm and wet season Northern Region had two (2) approved Level 2 Technical Rescue Stations located in Townsville and Mount Isa.

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Townsville had 16 positions and Mount Isa 6 positions, with the majority having Level 2 SWR.

46. The actual number of positions occupied at any time varies through attrition by way of transfers, promotion etc. However, we are never limited by these factors as we can request, and do receive, additional technical rescue staff via the SOC.

47. Our standing capability during 2010 / 2011 storm/flood season was as follows:

- Townsville – 14, of which 13 were SWR qualified and 7 were USAR qualified
- Mt Isa – 6, of which 4 were SWR qualified and 3 were USAR qualified

48. Within Northern Region, there are three Inflatable Work Platform resources available, two in Townsville and one in Mount Isa. We have developed three swift water rescue equipment caches located in Townsville, and easily transported in Q-Fleet utility vehicles. Also located in Townsville is an "Arc Angel" Inflatable Work Platform and a "JJJ" Inflatable Work Platform. Within the Townsville area there are no purpose built vehicles to transport the Inflatable Work Platform. However, the region has purchased high powered portable pumps and the Inflatable Work Platforms are transported in the rear of Regional Q-Fleet vehicles. Townsville has one iZone vehicle^o which currently has had no modification — however, the smaller Inflatable Work Platform can be easily transported on the roof.

[^o 'iZone' is the term used to describe the 'Interface Zone', the area where bushland meets urban or property development.]

49. Northern Region has a Plan for Extraordinary Events that enables specialist staff and equipment to pre-deploy to the surrounding towns with a small cache of equipment to support local staff. When this plan is enacted, staff utilise the Q-Fleet 4 x 4 and Station high clearance vehicles (i.e. Fire Engines). These vehicles are located in Ingham, Ayr, Bowen and Charters Towers. Townsville Station has an emergency tender that carries the area's technical rescue equipment, including swift water rescue equipment.

50. Mount Isa Station is located 917kms west of Townsville. Mount Isa has a designated trailer that stores all rescue equipment, including a purpose built rack to transport the "Arc Angel" Inflatable Work Platform. The trailer is towed behind the station 4x4 twin cab utility. Mount Isa station also houses a 4x4 high clearance wildfire appliance that can be utilised during flood events.

51. Northern Region also has the following high clearance vehicles available:

- A single cab Type 1 vehicle located at Collinsville. At this stage, this vehicle hasn't been utilised during flood events

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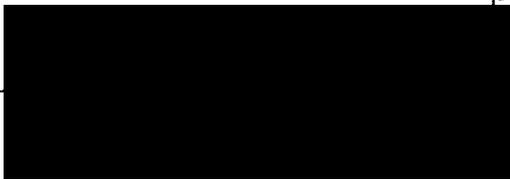
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- Two type 2 twin cab Echo vehicles located at Kirwan and Wulguru Station
52. Northern Region has developed an Operations Support Command that focuses on developing operational capability in numerous areas, including technical rescue. The command consists of an Inspector, a permanent Rescue Coordinator and other staff, all with rescue capability.
53. In accordance with the State Rescue Policy, QFRS does not have any swift water rescue operational staff located in the Gulf of Carpentaria. However, the support of QFRS Level 2 swift water rescue personnel is available on request from our rescue stations located in Mount Isa and Townsville. The regional rescue matrix indicates the SES accepts primary responsibility for the flood rescue role in the Gulf of Carpentaria — through its SES volunteers located in the Burke Shire at Burketown and Gregory Downs / Law; and in the Carpentaria Shire through its SES volunteers located at Karumba and Normanton.
4. **Any review of Swift Water Rescue capability within the Northern Region conducted since the 2010/2011 floods, including any findings or recommendations made and the response to these to date.**
54. Northern Region has continued to review and develop our SWR plans, systems and resources in the post TC Yasi period. We are represented, and participating, in the overall QFRS review program — including the implementation of the recommendations of the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry — and we have developed a specific and comprehensive Northern Region Swift Water Rescue Operational Plan.
55. My response to our 2011 / 2012 preparations provides some detail with respect to implementing the Commission of Inquiry recommendations, QFRS review recommendations, and some initiatives Northern Region are implementing.
56. In addition, I participated in the QFRS Senior Executive Management storm season debrief meeting, and contributed by way of an Assistant Commissioner Overview of regional operations — including observations on: areas that went well and should continue, and may be of benefit for others to consider; areas that we currently undertake which require improvement; areas that we need to meet a shortfall in or fix; areas that are beyond our control, but should be passed on. I also provided input into the state review process by noting issues, analysis, proposals and recommendations.
57. With respect to my submission to the QFRS Commissioner at the QFRS Senior Executive Management storm season debrief meeting, I can advise as follows:
- Matters that went well and should continue, will continue

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- Matters identified for improvement have been addressed for the 2011 / 2012 wet season
- Areas where we need to meet a shortfall or fix, are being worked on within the QFRS review process and the implementation of the Commission of Inquiry Recommendations.

Refer to Attachment marked "RCT-12" - Submission to QFRS Senior Executive Management.

I make this statement of my own free will believing its contents to be true and correct.

Justices Act 1886

I acknowledge by virtue of Section 110A(6)(c)(ii) of the Justices Act 1886 that:

- (1) This written statement by me dated 14 October 2011 and contained in the pages numbered 1 to 11 is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and
- (2) I make it knowing that, if it were admitted as evidence, I may be liable to prosecution for stating anything that I know is false.

 Signature

Signed at Brisbane this 14th day of October 2011

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JP/Lawyer/Commissioner for
Declarations: 

COURTNEY KIM
LAWYER.

